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CLOTHING

C. G. 291

The All-Caucasian men's costume is the "cherkeska" (Georg. chokha), an upper garment made of homespun cloth, coatshaped and cut to the figure, with long sleeves which widen towards the lower end, without lapels or collar and leaving open an inverted triangular space on the breast. It varies from knee to ankle length. The color is usually black or grey but can also be brown, yellow or white. On both sides of the breast cartridge-holders are sewn; these are now a mere ornament and are filled with ivory, metal or wooden cylinders, often with one dark and one light end, so that the end sticking out on top can be made to contrast with the color of the cherkeska itself. The cherkeska is fastened in front and held by a tight belt from which, in front, is suspended the dagger, without which the Caucasian considers his attire incomplete. Under the cherkeska a long shirt (R. beshmet) is worn, which is buttoned up high and has a round stand-up collar. Narrow trousers, shoes or boots (originally heelless), leggings and a fur cap (R. papakha) of sheepskin complete the costume. (This costume was adopted by the Russian Cossacks in the Caucasus; through them it became known and it is now usually associated with them in the West.) In cold or rainy weather felt cloaks (R. burka) or sheepskin coats (R. tulup) and fur hoods (R. bashlyk) are worn.

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The Kartvelians in the western subtropical regions (Mingrelians, Imretians, Gurians, Laz) wear various types of head-cloths instead of the papkha; among those in the south-west the cherkeska is mostly replaced by the Turkish short jacket which is tucked into a silk sash around the waist. Local peculiarities in clothing are found especially among the Kartvelian mountaineers. The Svan wear cone-shaped wide-brimmed felt hats (worn also by the Ossetes, their eastern neighbors). The Khevsur and Tush have felt caps sewn together of four pieces, with a turned-up brim. Also characteristic of the Svan are sleeveless jackets of calf-, goat-, or sheep-skin; of the Khevsur, gloves and mittens which in summer are worn on the belt and serve as containers for small objects and tobacco. The Khevsur costume is the only one in the Caucasus that is adorned with many-colored ornamentation: embroidery, beads, glass and metal buttons, metal plates and colored pieces of cloth. Their cherkeska is cut so as to leave visible a large part of the shirt, richly decorated with patterns consisting of straight-lined figures. Other adornments are found on the edges of the cherkeska, on the gloves and leggings. Instead of two cartridge-holders sewn on both sides of the breast, the Khevsur carry a single one on the belt. The costume of the Tush, the eastern neighbors of the Khevsur, is in sharp contrast with that of the latter: it is distinguished by its exclusively dark color (dark brown or black); ornamentation

C. G. 291 is used sparingly and limited to patterns in white on shoes and boots, and silver mountings on the belt. The Pshav have adopted Georgian attire.

C. G. 411 Not only is the Caucasian sober in the use of embellishments on his clothing, which is in itself quite elegant; he also does not wear any ornaments or trinkets. His esthetic sense finds an outlet in the decoration of his arms, however. The sheaths and hilts of daggers and sabers and the grips of pistols were often made of gold or silver, and adorned with precious stones or with niello-work (the latter also on the barrels). The Caucasian dagger--considered as important a part of the attire as is a tie in the West--has a straight, broad, double-edged blade with a groove (blood trough) running down the middle. Formerly, the armature consisted of one or two pistols, tucked behind the belt, a rifle, which the mountaineers always carried in a cover, and a saber. On the belt, various accessories (powderhorn, C. G. [713] grease container, flint, etc.) were worn. Only the Khevsur preserved until quite recently full medieval armor: helmets, coats of mail, shields, swords, clubs and toothed thumb-rings. The armor was worn on festive occa- C. G. [292] sions and also whenever a man might expect to be attacked because he was involved in a blood-feud, which was usually the case.

C. G. 291 The costume of the Caucasian women shows much more local variation than that of

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the men. Its general make-up consists of a chemise, "Turkish" trousers (R. sharovary) fastened at the ankles, a beshmet, an upper garment, usually long and worn with a belt or sash, stockings or socks, shoes, often with high heels, and a kerchief or veil, often worn over or attached to some other headcover.

The Georgian women used to wear an embroidered bodice over the chemise, red cotton sharovary, sometimes an underskirt with flounces, and a long silk or cotton gown, with a silk sash around the waist, the broad ends of which hung down to the feet. Their headgear consisted of a large white scarf or of an embroidered velvet cap and attached to it a muslin scarf which hung loose over the shoulders or was passed from behind down under the chin and back over the shoulder. The Khevsur women decorate not only the bodice but also the edges of their clothes with embroidered strips, pearls, beads and metal buttons and plates. Their Tush neighbors dress in black; only the bodice and cuffs are decorated in red and silver. The classical Kabardian gala costume (which enjoyed prestige in the whole northern Caucasus due to the cultural leadership of the Kabardians in that region in the 15th - 18th cent.) consisted of a bright-colored silken beshmet, a bodice with horizontal gold or silver galloons in front, and an upper garment in the shape of a cherkeska reaching to the ground and with half-long

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.291 sleeves and a decorated belt. To the sleeves large ellipsoid flaps were attached, embellished with embroidery in gold or silver thread. The patterns of the embroidery on this costume consisted usually of leaf and heart shapes. The headgear consisted of an originally cone-shaped, later truncated, bonnet with parallel galloons around it, and a white veil hanging down from the top. The female costume of Dagestan (and of Chechnia) consists of the basic garments mentioned above (except that instead of shoes, felt boots are often worn), plus a sheepskin coat in cold weather. The variety of the headgear almost matches that of the languages, certain types being limited to no more than a single village. The headgear is often decorated with rows of coins or metal plates, as are sometimes other parts of the clothing. The Kazan-Tatar hairsack, attached at the back of the head, was widespread in Chechnia and is also known in Dagestan. In the Zakataly district apron - like upper garments, worn under the belt, are common.

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301 The most common ornaments of the Caucasian women are headbands and frontlets, earrings, often with a half-moon-shaped widening at the bottom (Georgia), finger rings and mountings on the belt. The Khevsur women wear iron hoops on the arms and curious scythe-shaped eardrops decorated with hollow spheres. The Tush women wear necklaces with silver ornaments hanging down on the breast.

C. G. 301 In Chechnia and N. W. Dagestan head ornaments are found consisting of a band on top of the head with a concatenation of large metal or glass rings hanging down from it on both sides. As to the hairdo, the Georgian women have the hair hanging down loose over the back and shoulders or in braids around the head. Only on the Black Sea coast do they wear it hanging down in long braids. This is also the usual way in the Northern Caucasus. The Tush girls wear the hair in four braids which are cut off when they marry; the latter custom occurs also sporadically in Dagestan.

C. G. 291 177 It must be emphasized that the traditional costume has in most cases partly or wholly given way to the general European type of dress, and is worn only on holidays and special occasions such as weddings and other celebrations.

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Fig. 503. Persian fruit-seller in Baku.

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[177] through the Tatars, have exerted a strong influence from the earliest times on southern and eastern Caucasia with regard to mental culture, art, warfare, etc. As a landmark of their power, the great stone wall, which extends from the national portal on the Caspian Sea, from the city [825] of Derbend [103] (Persian = gate-lock; Tatar, Demír-kapú = iron door; Arabic, Bāb-el-abwāb = gate of gates), to the west 60 to 70 kilometers into the mountains, still stands today. It was erected by the Sassanid king, Khosrau Anōšarvān (531-579 A.D.), for protection against the invasions of the Khazar and Alan, against whom his father, Kobad (491-531), had already built a wall [512] of mud bricks that was strengthened by many towers and small citadels (kalé). Except for indigenous tribes, Khosrau entrusted the defense of the wall primarily to Iranian settlers whom he had brought over from Persia and the land of Sogd, that is Kharezmia and Samarkand. The inhabitants of the Kaitakh region, the Tabassaran, seem to be descendants of these settlers, and their name may be a contraction of Tabor-i-Khorassan (= host, people from Khorassan); likewise the Tāt between Baku, Kuba, and the Babadagh and near Derbend. The former may have sprung from a mixture of Lezgin with

[825 cont.]
Iranians (cf. p. 674 f. [untranslated]) and accordingly are called by the Tatar āzade khalkh' or khelaiq (= free people), as are all Lezgin, in contrast to the Tāt, who are called raiyat khelaiq (= subject people). Their name is related to that of the central Asian Tajik (see Vol. II, 1, pp. 412 ff.), and their language is close [Fig. 504 appears here] [826] to modern Persian; it is also spoken by the mountain Jews in Dagestan and on the Terek. In their old cemeteries and near their villages there are isolated ruins of buildings that indicate Christianity in former times. Their relatives, the Talysh in humid, hot Lenkoran on the Caspian Sea, surrounded by Azerbaijani and Tatars, speak another variety of modern Persian that is supposed to contain much Old Persian.

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As late as the first half of the nineteenth century, a remnant of the Old Persians, adherents of the teachings of Zoroaster or Zerdusht, the Geber, lived on the plain of Surakhane or Ateshga (= fire-land) near Baku, where a temple stood, in which they worshiped the eternal fire fed by a natural gas source. They had moved here from Persia after they had been driven from there and their main temple on the mountain near Yesd destroyed; they gradually

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Fig. 504. Two-wheeled carriage, Baku region.